

which had been *cut off* for want of a sufficient supply. Since we knew this—for a month or more now—we have been sending regular batches of things out to her; she writes most gratefully for them, and in most cases they are used up within a few hours of arrival. If anyone would care to send some things direct to her, her permanent address, wherever she may be, is, No. 2, General Hospital, British Expeditionary Force. I enclose some extracts from my sister's letters.—Yours, etc.,

E. M. PICKFORD.

LATER.—Sister Kathleen Flower has quite recently been sent nearer the firing line, and has not yet sent her new address.

Extracts from letters from Sister Kathleen Flower, No. 2, General Hospital:

"If you hear of any people wanting to send shirts or socks, old linen or woollen rags, get them to send them to me. We want them badly for the men. We read in the papers that people in England are asked not to send any more, that there are plenty, and yet we have hardly any, and many of the men have not had their socks off for four or five weeks. We have to cut them off. Their feet are in wonderfully good condition considering; the socks are excellent in quality, and some of them have not a sign of a hole in them after all that time. The shirts, too, are excellent quality, warm and comfortable, but in many cases hard with blood, and, of course, dirty. Some of the poor fellows are dreadfully mauled about and disfigured with these horrid shrapnel wounds. The bullet wounds heal wonderfully quickly when the bullet is out, and the men are in surprisingly good condition, and so fat.

"The things we need most of all are woollen helmets, mufflers, gloves, handkerchiefs, and day shirts, as warm as

possible. Socks and jerseys we also use, but are getting some sent now. Cigarettes and chocolate, of course, are luxuries which they also enjoy, and can do with a great deal. The old linen I asked for is not necessary now. When we came out everything was new, towels, cloths, sheets, and pillow-cases. Can you imagine anything worse than washing a very ill patient and having nothing but a hard board of a new linen towel to dry him on? It was like a nutmeg grater, and it was a long time before we could get them washed; but now we have a contract with a laundry."

(November 4th, postcard.)

"Very many thanks for the lovely parcels you sent, which arrived to-day, and couldn't have come at a better time. We had a lot in last night, who were in the same condition as the first batch we had. . . . When these poor men came in in such a condition, I gave them a packet of cigarettes each first thing, and they *were* pleased. Also they had a pair of socks each; we had run out of hospital ones. Everyone would have been delighted could they have seen their gifts used to-day, they were appreciated to the full."

In another letter Sister Kathleen Flower asked for soap; it really seems that they can do with any amount of it.

(Miss K. Flower is sister to Mrs. Pickford and Mrs. Smith and Miss E. E. Flower. She was at the Practising School.)

A VISIT TO A MONTESSORI SCHOOL.

I have been asked to write an account of a visit I paid to a Montessori School while at Rome. There is really not much to say.

The school I saw was in a convent, was established especially for training Montessori teachers, and was under

the personal direction of "La Dottoressa," who was expected there next day to give a demonstration class. The children, twenty or thirty little people, aged from 3 to 6, belong to the richer classes, and came from comfortable homes. They were at school from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and had no regular rest time, although the teacher would encourage a child to rest in the afternoon if she thought he looked tired. The schoolroom was bright and airy, and overlooked a garden (it would be more in accordance with the method, we were told, but not practical there, to have the school out of doors), and the children, the boys and girls being distinguished respectively by a blue or pink overall, were seated on low chairs, at tables, engaged in the occupations with which you are all doubtless so familiar that I need not describe them.

When we came in the children ran up in a crowd, shook our hands, and bid us "bon giorno," and then returned to their occupations. They did this, of course, without any prompting from their teacher—suggestion from "grown-ups" is vigorously eschewed—but we thought their manner rather dull and mechanical.

The title of the discussion at the conference was, if I remember rightly, "Helpful points from the Montessori Method," but I cannot, I fear, recall from this visit hints that would be of value to a P.N.E.U. trained teacher, although perhaps some details of equipment might be suggestive. There were points, however, amid much with which we would disagree, where Madame Montessori does seem to meet us on common ground. We were glad to see, for instance, the encouragement of fresh air, of free movement instead of making the children stay in a fixed attitude, while the quiet authority and self-effacement of the gracious, white-robed nun in charge of the class was a striking example of "masterly inactivity." Certainly the personality of the

teacher did not, directly or indirectly, obtrude itself on the children. She seldom suggested an occupation, and the children seemed hardly aware of her. They did not appeal to her to tell them what to do or to help them out of their difficulties; they relied on themselves, or—they left it and didn't bother. Yet when a child persistently annoyed another the teacher was able, with a word or two, to change his thoughts to other occupations, and when another (perhaps new to the school?) showed a special desire for approbation after some achievement she would see it and give a smile of encouragement.

It struck me that an enormous respect was shown at this school for what was conceived to be the child's individuality, and that, indeed, this was perhaps the chief underlying principle of the work; but that, at the same time, there was a sadly limited appreciation of what a child's personality stands for, of the vast depths and extent of his powers, interests, thoughts and feelings, and of the wide relationships and grand inheritance which, as Miss Mason says, are his by right.

The children, in spite of their liberty and busy activity and the freedom and ease of movement, looked to me mentally starved and rather bored—just interested enough to do the occupations without dreaming or playing, but not engrossed.

The hypnotic influence and constraint that one feared might be manifested were not evident in this school, but one longed to see the little boys and girls romp or play together, or show some spark of the divine fire of imagination or romance—something beyond the five senses.

Imagination, effort, co-operation struck me, I think, as the most striking gaps in the training.

Imagination—and with this I include tales, history, narration, art (unless one may dignify by this name the

colouring of outline drawings which is indulged in), and indeed anything touching the mind or soul, or generating ideas—is, as we know, completely left out in the method. The nuns supplement the authorized work by a daily catechism lesson, a few somewhat perfunctory prayers and a kindergarten song; but they rather apologized for these excrescences. I was struck especially with one manifestation of this prosaic environment. We were shown, with pride, a blackboard covered with writing, an excellent, clear, copy-book hand, and were told that, of course, the little girl who had written it had done so spontaneously because she felt inclined to express herself in that way. The context, however, was merely a number of names of common objects, such phrases as "Good morning," "It is warm," etc., colours, and so on—not a single idea or connected sentence. On an opposite board another child had written almost exactly the same.

Effort we also know to be disapproved of by La Dottoressa for young children. There was no incentive to it, and the occupations in themselves did not seem important enough for the child to care very much if they were done well or not, or if they were left unfinished.

Of co-operation I saw none. The only social training was the purely negative one of not interfering with others. The only combined teaching, apparently, was in the subjects the nuns superimposed in the silence game and in an occasional dictation lesson (!) which the teacher would sometimes give to a small group if she found several who wanted to learn it.

I have said nothing about the nature of the occupations, for these were just what are described in the books. Indeed, the method seemed to be fairly literally carried out, including the doctrine that one should refrain from correcting mistakes. For instance, one child was engaged in building up small coins to the value of one franc. She put together nine

pennies, but was not told she was wrong. Probably one day another child will tell her, and then she will do it right!

I asked the charming Irish nun who took charge of us what would happen if a child wanted to *play* with the apparatus—to build a train, for instance, with the graduated bricks. The answer was, most emphatically, that this, of course, would not be allowed. It would be against the method, for "there would be no educational value in that." The freedom of action, of which we hear so much, seems to be limited to the choice of some set apparatus which must be used in the prescribed manner.

I saw the "silence game" played, and thought, in the way that it was done there, that it would be a good thing to try. The room was not darkened. The teacher merely called up children, who tiptoed to her, while the others kept as still as they could. It lasted such a short time (two or three minutes) that it did not seem much strain, nor were the children so immaculately quiet as to be over "anxious." It was almost exciting too, to wonder who would be called up next and what would be whispered to her, and only a very few of the children refrained from joining the game.

At 12 o'clock all the children ran out into the garden, except those whose turn it was to lay the table for dinner. This was done neatly and quickly, with no teacher in the room to supervise.

I should like, in conclusion, to point out that this is merely a rather disconnected account of one visit to a particular school, and does not attempt, in any way, to be a general or balanced account of the Montessori method.

M. E. FRANKLIN.

BOOKS RECOMMENDED.

- "Hand-loom Weaving," by Mrs. Christie.
- "Bookbinding," by Douglas Cockerell.
- "Embroidery and Tapestry Weaving," by Luther Hoofer.
- "Writing and Illuminating and Lettering," by Edward Johnston.

All these belong to the "Artistic Crafts Series of Technical Handbooks," edited by W. R. Lethaby. People thoroughly interested in the above crafts will find these books to be of the greatest value, full of clear instruction, and amply illustrated.

The following books can be recommended to anyone who is interested in naval strategy, and wants to understand about the Navy. It is recommended that they be read in the order given; the first one is 1s., and the others are expensive, but can be got from libraries:

Thursfield's "Naval Warfare."

Julian Corbett's "Campaign of Trafalgar."

Mahan's "Influence of Sea Power."

Corbett's "Drake and the Tudor Navy."

Mahan's "Naval Strategy."

Captain Señonoff's "The Battle of Tsu-Shima" is also very interesting, as is his "Rasplata or The Reckoning."

For short stories about the Navy, "Naval Occasions" is excellent. Price 1s.